

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SCRUTINY PANEL ON TUESDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2017**

Statement on the Panel's Review of Proposed Waste Charges

The purpose of this statement is to advise Members of the current status of the work being undertaken by the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel in relation to waste charges in the light of certain changes, both as to responsibility and timetable, proposed by the Council of Ministers.

In July of this year, the Panel undertook a review of the proposals (as brought forward by the Minister for Infrastructure) to introduce charges for liquid waste. Such review contained a number of recommendations and the Panel was pleased that, at the time of the debate on the 19th July, Members were good enough to recognise the extent of these (including the need for further consultation with stakeholders) and agreed that the proposals should be brought back to the Assembly for further debate on the 12th December 2017.

Members will recall that the Medium Term Financial Plan covered both liquid waste and solid waste charges and, at one time, it had been the intention of the Minister for Infrastructure to lodge the two propositions simultaneously. Whilst the decision was subsequently taken to deal with them separately, it was always the Panel's intention to also review the latter when they were finalised and lodged for debate, as the Panel understood, before the end of the year. In consequence, the Panel has since July been in communication with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) as to the provision of relevant information to enable them to continue with this scrutiny exercise as to both matters. However, the absence of any detailed response, particularly as to proposed timetable, prompted myself on behalf of the Panel to raise a question of the Chief Minister as to which Department was now responsible for these matters and, by way of reply, he indicated at the last sitting that the introduction of both liquid and solid waste charges would henceforth be led by the Minister for Treasury and Resources.

As to the overall timetable, the Panel presently awaits a reply to its letter to the Chief Minister on the subject. However, it is noted that the Draft Budget Statement 2018 has confirmed that the decision regarding the introduction of liquid waste charges has been deferred until 2019 and, in the absence of a detailed timetable from the Treasury Department, we gain the impression that the propositions for both sets of charges will not be made until after next May's election.

Members will appreciate the curious position in which the Panel now finds itself. Having conducted a review of the liquid waste proposals, we had anticipated (and indeed wished) that we would be able to continue with our work to see it through to its conclusion but it seems that this may not be possible; in relation to the solid waste proposals, this was again to be a major piece of work for which we had set aside the necessary time and, having particular regard to our initial work on the matter, the Panel is again disappointed that despite its best efforts to progress matters it may be prevented from conducting this further and related review.

In relation to both matters, the Panel wishes to record its intention to keep abreast of any matters that arise and of any work undertaken by the Treasury Department before the end of the current political term and, in that connection, looks forward to hearing from the Department both as to its timetable and any current outstanding items. However, should the present Panel be unable to continue with its work until completion, we intend to include in our legacy report a recommendation that the new Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Panel reconstituted after the elections continue with such work. Again, the Panel regrets that it has felt it necessary to inform Members as to the frustrating position in which it finds itself.